



REEPORT NEWSLETTER

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This REEport Newsletter provides an update on recent REEport releases, clarification of FTE calculations, and an update on financial reporting. It also explains a change in REEport customer service staff and an effort underway to improve REEport reporting guidelines.

New REEport Releases

Two new releases of the REEport system have recently been deployed. While there were many “background upgrades” made to mitigate timeout issues and other technical bugs, the system functionality changes directly affecting users include:

Multiple Role Functionality: Many users who were assigned multiple roles in the system were not able to correctly edit or “see” project templates that belonged to them. Conversely, some were able to see project templates that did not belong to them. REEport now allows for multi-role users to have all the proper privileges available to them for each of their assigned roles.

Reporting Period Dates Fixed: Capacity projects that had undergone a project change to extend the end date were showing incorrect reporting period dates on their current progress report templates; this has been fixed.

Old Award Close Outs: Old non-capacity projects that previously only existed in the old CRIS system have all been brought into REEport so that Project Directors can submit Final Reports as requested by NIFA’s close out team.

New Projects vs. Project Changes: The screen view given to National Program Leaders has changed so that they can more readily identify exactly which projects pending their review are new projects and which are change requests. This should help expedite the review and approval of all change requests, including administrative changes that would not normally require NPL approval (but which

do now only because of the transition from CRIS to REEport).

Clarification on FTE Reporting in REEport

It is very important for NIFA to collect accurate data which reflects the *total amount of effort put forth towards a project each fiscal year*. The [Research Performance Progress Report](#) defines “effort” as person months worked. When you think about it this way, you can see how an FTE/SY number should only be representative of the amount of TIME that a person dedicated toward moving the project forward to achieving its originally stated goals. An FTE or any fraction thereof should NOT be calculated based on funding tied to the project; it is not related to a person’s salary or to any monies, federal or other, that were used for the project. While you should not count volunteers, any paid person (including sub-awardees) who contributed a measurable amount of time toward a project should be counted in the overall FTE count of the project on each yearly progress report in REEport.

To further clarify, an FTE is defined by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) as the number of total hours worked divided by the maximum number of compensable hours in a full-time schedule as defined by law. For most NIFA partners and places of employment, a full-time schedule as defined by law equates to 2,080 hours of work (52 weeks multiplied by 40 hours per week). Thus, a person who works 40 hours per week for 52 weeks towards a project equals 1 FTE. As another example, a student who works full time for 10 weeks on a project during the summer (10x40 hours per week) equals .2 FTE (2,080/400=.19).

FY13 Financial Reporting

FY13 expenditure reporting on Capacity Projects was due on February 1, 2014 using the AD-419 in CRIS Webforms. AD-419s are only due from institutions

that receive capacity funds from NIFA. FTE reporting was required as part of these FY13 AD-419 reports. This will ensure that during this time of transition from the CRIS Webforms system to REEport that NIFA is still able to collect complete FY13 expenditure and FTE (research effort) data.

Next fiscal year, all FY14 expenditure and FTE reporting will be done entirely via REEport. A Financial Module will be used to collect expenditure data from any institution that receives NIFA capacity funds. This financial module will NOT allow batch reporting for FTE/SY data. FTE/SY reporting will be done on a project by project basis via the Progress Report and/or Final Report modules. Reporting on the participation of scientists and other professional staff on any project funded by NIFA (at least in part) fall under the guidelines of the [Research Performance Progress Report](#) and thus, must be reported as part of the progress report. As a reminder, the RPPR is a government-wide mandate which NIFA must follow for all research project performance reporting.

REEport Customer Service at NIFA

As part of an agency effort to streamline the channels through which NIFA partners and customers get help, a “Tier 1 Help Desk” for REEport has been established. The purpose of this transition is to give users of the REEport system more timely responses to “Tier 1 Level” questions/issues, such as system login troubleshooting, how to submit a report, and identifying the status of a project or report submission.

Starting March 3rd, all phone calls to 202-690-0009 or emails to reeport@nifa.usda.gov will automatically be handled first by the Tier 1 Help Desk. The staff there has the bandwidth to monitor phone calls and emails most efficiently during standard business hours. They will forward on any question or issue that requires Tier 2 support to the REEport Staff in the Planning, Accountability & Reporting office at NIFA.

Revamping the REEport Reporting Guidelines

The REEport system offers extensive help text in many sections of the software. Much of the guidance on those help text boxes is repeated and expanded upon in the REEport User Manual.

However, many users have pointed out that certain sections seem lacking in their ability to clearly articulate what NIFA actually desires in a specific field. This is especially true in the progress and final report modules. We have also heard a need for better examples of what NIFA considers to be a well written “accomplishments” section, including strong impact statements; in particular we’ve been asked to differentiate between good examples of basic and applied research all the way through extension-based impacts.

A working group at NIFA consisting of staff from different units has been formed to address this need. The group’s sole purpose is to “rewrite the REEport help text and reporting guidelines from the bottom up” and, in addition, to make those guidelines more readily accessible via shorter desk guides, cheat sheets, video clips, and other media. If you would like to provide any ideas or comments on what would help you or your colleagues submit better reports to NIFA via REEport, please send an email to reeport@nifa.usda.gov. The current REEport User Manual can be accessed [here](#).

Additional Resources

Visit the REEport Implementation web page at:

http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reeport_imp.html

This is your one-stop-shop for all REEport training presentations, guidance documents, past newsletters, and more.

Sign up for Reporting Web Conference series. www.nifa.usda.gov/rwc. RWCs are given bimonthly on the second Thursday of the month from 2:00-3:30 pm (Eastern). The next RWC will be held on April 10th.

Contact Information

electronic@nifa.usda.gov (as of March 3, 2014)

reeport@nifa.usda.gov

You may also call the REEport Customer Service Line at 202-690-0009. If you leave a message, please leave your full name, what you’re trying to do in REEport, and the accession number (for capacity) or proposal number (for non-capacity) of the project.